

**United States Department of the Interior**  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. **Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a).**

## 1. Name of Property

Historic name Conley Street Bridge

Other names/site number 24PW608/MDT Identification No. M39031000+00401

## 2. Location

street & number Clark Fork River Crossing on Conley Street ☐ not for publication

city or town Deer Lodge ☐ vicinity

State Montana code MT county Powell code 077 zip code 59722

## 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this x nomination     request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property x meets     does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

    national   X   statewide   X   local

Signature of certifying official

Date

Title

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property     meets     does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official

Date

Title

State or Federal agency and bureau

## 4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

    entered in the National Register

    determined eligible for the National Register

    determined not eligible for the National Register

    removed from the National Register

    other (explain:)

Conley Street Bridge  
Name of Property

Powell County, Montana  
County and State

## 5. Classification

### Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

<input type="checkbox"/>	private
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	public - Local
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - State
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Federal
<input type="checkbox"/>	private

### Category of Property

(Check only **one** box)

<input type="checkbox"/>	building(s)
<input type="checkbox"/>	district
<input type="checkbox"/>	site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	structure
<input type="checkbox"/>	building(s)
<input type="checkbox"/>	object

### Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
		buildings
		sites
1		structures
		Objects
		buildings
1	0	<b>Total</b>

### Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

Reinforced Concrete Bridges of Montana, 1900-1958

### Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

3

## 6. Function or Use

### Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

TRANSPORTATION/Road-related (vehicular) =  
Bridge

### Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

TRANSPORTATION/Road-related (vehicular) =  
Bridge

## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

OTHER: Reinforced Concrete T-Beam Bridge

### Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation: Concrete

walls:

roof:

other: Concrete

Conley Street Bridge  
Name of Property

Powell County, Montana  
County and State

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### **Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

### **Summary Paragraph**

The Conley Street Bridge, which crosses the Clark Fork River at the south end of the City of Deer Lodge, consists of one contributing structure that was constructed by convict labor in 1911. The three-span reinforced concrete T-beam bridge is 152 feet long and 20 feet wide. During the first two decades of the twentieth century, the Montana State Penitentiary embarked on an ambitious construction program to improve and expand the prison's infrastructure and to improve roads in western Montana. The Conley Street Bridge is the largest of several reinforced concrete bridges built by convict labor during that period. It is also representative of the type of reinforced concrete T-beam bridges built in Montana before the Bluewater Creek Bridge's (24CB1309) design in Carbon County supplanted it in 1913. The setting of the Conley Street Bridge is largely still intact and its close association with the prison complex is also intact.

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### **Narrative Description**

The Conley Street Bridge crosses the Clark Fork River on Conley Street at the south end of the City of Deer Lodge adjacent to the old Montana State Penitentiary. The street is maintained by the city, but the bridge is owned by Powell County. The bridge is located in the broad Deer Lodge valley of southwestern Montana. The valley is comprised of sedimentary debris that washed out of the Flint Creek Mountains to the west. The eastern side of the valley is bordered by the Boulder Mountains and the Boulder Batholith. Deer Lodge is one of Montana's oldest communities. It was founded in 1863 as a supply point for travelers on the Mullan Road and miners combing the surrounding hills for the next big strike. The territorial legislature established the state penitentiary in Deer Lodge in 1869; the present facility closed in 1979 and now serves as a museum. The bridge now carries traffic between Deer Lodge's main street and a lumber mill that partially occupies the site of the old Milwaukee Road Railroad yards.<sup>1</sup>

The Conley Street Bridge is a three-span reinforced concrete T-beam structure. The bridge is 152 feet in length and consists of three 50-foot spans. It is 20 feet wide with a roadway width of 16 feet. The bridge rests on two solid reinforced concrete piers and two reinforced concrete abutments. The T-beams are flush with the sidewalls of the bridge. The sidewalls are extended to form the solid concrete guardwalls of the structure. The walls have extended corniced balustrades and there are decorative rectangle and diamond-shaped indentations on the guardwalls. There are extended concrete mid and endposts on the bridge; all have extended caps. There are also indications that the endposts were once surmounted by lampposts. An asphalt overlay has been placed on the deck of the one-lane structure.

### **Integrity**

The Conley Street Bridge retains excellent integrity of design, workmanship, feeling, and materials. It is one of only three known prison convict-built bridges remaining in the state. Other than the removal of the lampposts, there have been no modifications or alterations made to the structure. The setting of the historic bridge is also largely intact with little modern intrusion in the immediate vicinity of it.

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<sup>1</sup> David Alt and Donald W. Hyndman, *Roadside Geology of Montana*, (Missoula: Mountain Press Publishing, 1991), 162; Roberta Carkeek Cheney, *Names on the Face of Montana: The Story of Montana's Place Names*, (Missoula: Mountain Press Publishing, 1990), 70-71; Don Spritzer, *Roadside History of Montana*, (Missoula: Mountain Press Publishing, 1999), 207-209.

Conley Street Bridge  
Name of Property

Powell County, Montana  
County and State

## 8. Statement of Significance

### Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- ☒ A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☒ C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

### Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply)

Property is:

- ☐ A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ B removed from its original location.
- ☐ C a birthplace or grave.
- ☐ D a cemetery.
- ☐ E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- ☐ F a commemorative property.
- ☐ G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

### Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Engineering

Transportation

### Period of Significance

1911-1960

### Significant Dates

1911, 1913

### Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above)

### Cultural Affiliation

### Architect/Builder

Montana State Penitentiary

### Period of Significance (justification)

The Period of Significance encompasses the construction of the bridge and its subsequent use to facilitate the movement of supplies from the Milwaukee Road Railroad yard and the Montana State Penitentiary in Deer Lodge. Though the penitentiary closed in 1979, the bridge is still in use providing access to the former penitentiary which serves as a museum.

### Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)

Conley Street Bridge

Name of Property

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**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria)

The Conley Street Bridge is eligible for the National Register under Criteria A and C. It is one of three reinforced concrete bridges remaining in Montana that were constructed by convict labor in the first decade of the twentieth century. The penitentiary, along with Carbon County, was one of the pioneers in the use of concrete for bridges in Montana. This bridge also exhibits the "old style" of concrete T-beam bridge design where the girders were flush with the sidewalks rather than recessed under the deck. The bridge is an excellent and well-documented example of an early concrete bridge in the state and it retains excellent integrity with all of its original components intact and in good condition and the setting is intact.

**Narrative Statement of Significance** (provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance)

The Conley Street Bridge can be listed on the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for its association with the Montana State Penitentiary and the use of convict labor outside the prison's walls, a practice common in the state from 1907 until the mid-1920s. State penitentiary convicts built at least four reinforced concrete bridges in southwestern Montana beginning in 1907 and culminating in the Conley Street Bridge in 1911. The bridge was part of a program instituted by the prison's warden, Frank Conley, to improve the infrastructure in western Montana and to rehabilitate prison inmates and provide them with a useful vocation upon release.

The bridge is also an excellent and intact early example of a reinforced concrete T-beam bridge. The bridge exhibits the standard concrete girders flush to the sidewalks common in Montana before the construction of the Bluewater Creek Bridge (24CB1309) in 1913. The design appears to have been standard to convict-built bridges in southwestern Montana between 1907 and 1913. It is not known where prison warden Frank Conley obtained the design for the bridge. All of the bridge's original structural components and appearance are intact and unmodified. It is in excellent condition and continues to function in its original capacity on an important providing access to an industrial area of Deer Lodge. The bridge is eligible for the National Register under Criterion C.

**Engineering Significance**

The Conley Street Bridge is an early example of a reinforced concrete bridge in Montana. The penitentiary and Carbon County were the pioneers in the use of the material in the early twentieth century. The bridge is significant for its association with the Montana State Penitentiary and its program to put convicts to work on infrastructure improvements as a means of rehabilitation for inmates. It is also significant as an early example of the common T-beam design where the concrete girders are flush with the sidewalks rather than recessed under the deck. That would be the standard design until 1914 when the Bluewater Creek Bridge (24CB1309) was constructed in Carbon County.

**Developmental history/additional historic context information** (if appropriate)

The Conley Street Bridge was constructed by convicts from the adjacent Montana State Penitentiary. It is the first continuous span reinforced concrete T-beam bridge built in Montana. The existing bridge replaced a wooden bridge with trestle-type bents that was constructed by the county in the 1870s or 1880s. In 1911, Warden Frank Conley proposed construction of the existing bridge using convict labor. He estimated the cost of the bridge at approximately \$1,600 "provided it is built with convict labor which will take twenty convicts three days." The cost of the bridge was partially defrayed by the Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul & Pacific Railroad and Powell County. When completed in 1913, the warden declared "on this site now stands a handsome bridge, 150 feet long and 20 feet wide with three spans of 50 feet each on a level grade, a necessary convenience for the transportation of material for the prison." The bridge facilitated the movement of supplies between the railroad yard on the west side of the river and the prison on the east side of the river.<sup>2</sup>

**Montana State Penitentiary and Frank Conley**

<sup>2</sup> Frank Conley, *Nineteenth Annual Report for the Montana State Prison for the Year Ending December 31, 1914*, (Deer Lodge: Montana State Prison, 1915), 17; Jon Axline, *Conveniences Sorely Needed: Montana's Historic Highway Bridges, 1860-1956*, (Helena: Montana Historical Society, 2005), 53-54.

Conley Street Bridge

Name of Property

Powell County, Montana

County and State

The construction of the Conley Street Bridge was part of a progressive work program initiated by Warden Frank Conley to expand the prison complex and, in the process, instill a good work ethic among the prisoners and elevate their self esteem. A native of Maryland, Frank Conley arrived in Montana in 1880 and became a deputy sheriff in Custer County. In 1886, Conley was hired on as a guard at the Deer Lodge penitentiary. In 1890, the State of Montana contracted with Conley and partner Thomas McTague to operate the penitentiary. The prison was chronically overcrowded and lacked any system by which prisoners could redeem themselves. Conley hit upon a plan to utilize convict labor to expand the prison complex, put idle inmates to work, and ease the financial burden of expanding the prison. In 1911, the prison embarked on a significant expansion program that included the extension of the walls, construction of a power-plant and kitchen and dining facilities, and the building of a new cell block. The Conley Street Bridge was part of that expansion program. Frank Conley employed convict labor outside the walls to make bricks, work the prison ranches, and building roads. The program survived Conley when he was relieved of his duties at the penitentiary in 1922 until 1927 when the State officially discontinued the use of convict labor on state projects.<sup>3</sup>

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## 9. Major Bibliographical References

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**Bibliography** (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets)

Alt, David and Donald W. Hyndman. *Roadside Geology of Montana*. (Missoula: Mountain Press Publishing, 1991).

Axline, Jon. *Conveniences Sorely Needed: Montana's Historic Highway Bridges, 1860-1956*. (Helena: Montana Historical Society, 2005).

Baumler, Ellen. *Dark Spaces: Montana's Historic Penitentiary at Deer Lodge*. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2008).

Bridge Inspection Record No. M39031000+00401. Montana Department of Transportation. Helena, Montana.

Cheney, Roberta Carkeek. *Names on the Face of Montana: The Story of Montana's Place Names*. (Missoula: Mountain Press Publishing, 1990).

Conley, Frank. *Nineteenth Annual Report for the Montana State Prison for the Year Ending December 31, 1914*. (Deer Lodge: Montana State Prison, 1915).

McDonald, James R., ed. *Montana State Penitentiary History*. (Deer Lodge: Powell County Museum and Arts Foundation, 1979).

Montana State Highway Commission Meeting Minute Books. Montana Department of Transportation. Helena, Montana.

Spritzer, Don. *Roadside History of Montana*. (Missoula: Mountain Press Publishing, 1999).

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been requested)  
☐ previously listed in the National Register  
☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register  
☐ designated a National Historic Landmark  
☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_  
☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

☐ State Historic Preservation Office  
☒ Other State agency  
☐ Federal agency  
☐ Local government  
☐ University  
☐ Other

Name of repository: Montana Department of Transportation

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<sup>3</sup> Ellen Baumler, *Dark Spaces: Montana's Historic Penitentiary at Deer Lodge*, (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2008), 13, 15, 17, 20; James R. McDonald, ed., *Montana State Prison History*, (Deer Lodge: Powell County Museum and Arts Foundation, 1979), 20-21, 27, 30; Montana State Highway Commission Meeting Minutes, Book 3, 179-180 (13 July 1927).

Conley Street Bridge  
Name of Property

Powell County, Montana  
County and State

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): \_\_\_\_\_

## 10. Geographical Data

**Acreage of Property** 1.0  
(do not include previously listed resource acreage)

### UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

1	<u>12</u> Zone	<u>366500</u> Easting	<u>5138700</u> Northing	3	<u>      </u> Zone	<u>      </u> Easting	<u>      </u> Northing
2	<u>      </u> Zone	<u>      </u> Easting	<u>      </u> Northing	4	<u>      </u> Zone	<u>      </u> Easting	<u>      </u> Northing

### Verbal Boundary Description (describe the boundaries of the property)

The boundary for the Conley Street Bridge is a rectangle measuring 152 x 25 feet. The rectangle encompasses the bridge and its approaches on both sides of the river. The boundary is centered on the bridge.

### Boundary Justification (explain why the boundaries were selected)

Boundaries for the Conley Street Bridge are drawn to encompass the three spans of the bridge, its immediate approaches and that portion of the river spanned by the bridge. The width is increased beyond the measurements of the structure to include the piers and abutments.

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Jon Axline/Historian  
organization Montana Department of Transportation date November 16, 2009  
street & number 2701 Prospect Avenue telephone (406) 444-6258  
city or town Helena state MT zip code 59620-1001  
e-mail [jaxline@mt.gov](mailto:jaxline@mt.gov)

## Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.  
  
A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

**Photographs:**

Conley Street Bridge

Name of Property

Powell County, Montana

County and State

Submit clear and descriptive black and white photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

**(See Continuation Sheets)**

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**Property Owner:**

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

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name City of Deer Lodge

street & number 300 Main Street

telephone 406-846-2238

city or town Deer Lodge

state MT

zip code 59722

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, PO Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 10 Page 1

Conley Street Bridge Bridge (24PW608)

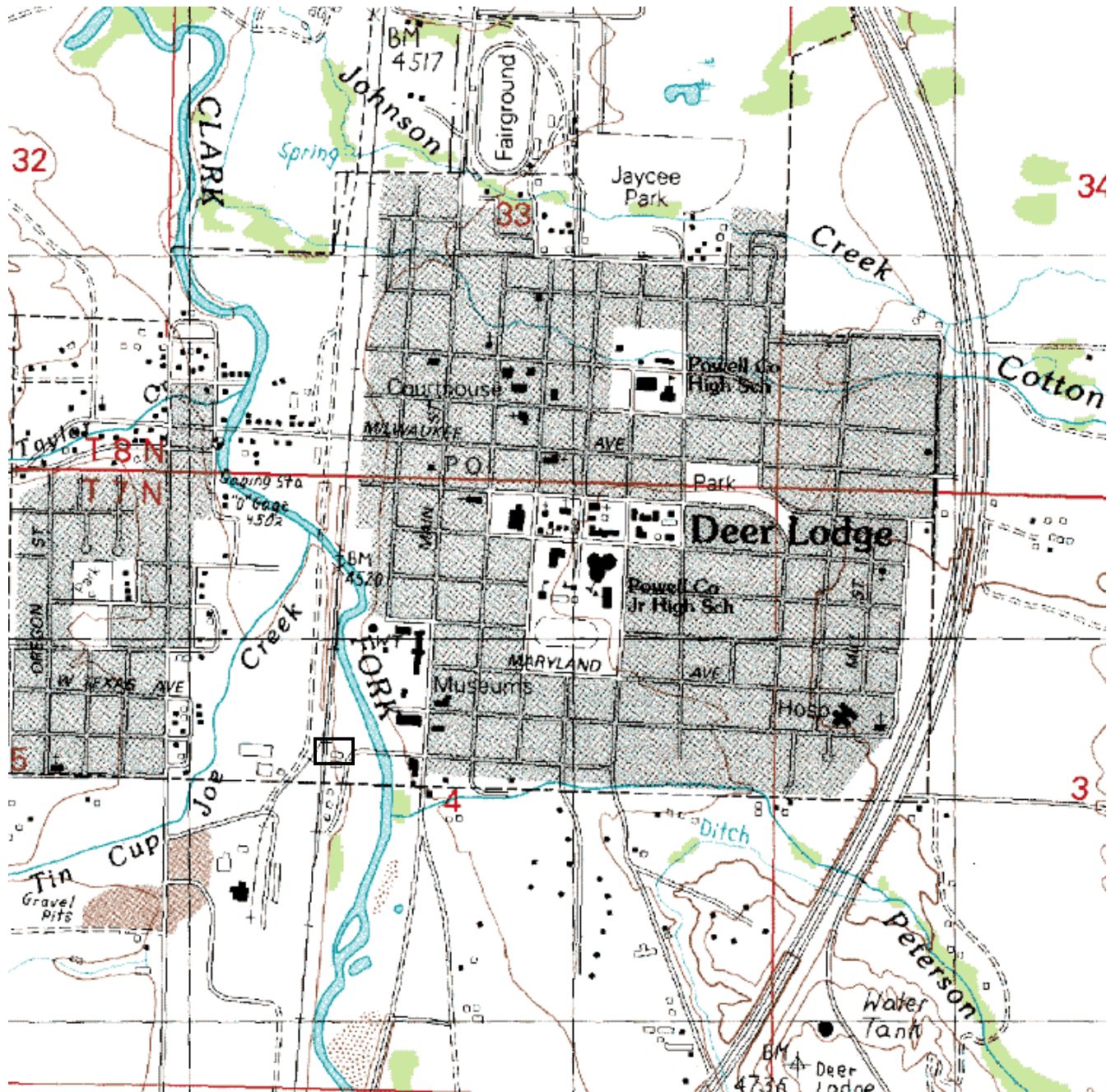
Name of Property

Powell County, Montana

County and State

Reinforced Concrete Bridges of Montana,  
1900-1961

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)



Location of Conley Street Bridge. Found on the Deer Lodge, Montana 7.5' Quadrangle Map (provisional edition 1989).

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Conley Street Bridge Bridge (24PW608)

Name of Property

Powell County, Montana

County and State

Reinforced Concrete Bridges of Montana,  
1900-1961

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Photographs

Page 1

**Photolog**

Name: Conley Street Bridge (24PW608)  
County and State: Powell County, Montana  
Photographer: Kristi Hager  
Date of Photograph: 2005  
Location of original negative: Montana Department of Transportation. Helena, Montana.  
Description and view of camera: South profile. View to northwest.  
Photograph: 0001, MT\_Powell County \_ Conley Street Bridge\_0001

